**Drama**

**Plot, action and content**

* the **plot** of the drama is shown in the 'through-line' of the drama - its beginning, middle and end - although it doesn't have to be presented in a [*linear*](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/drama/creating/elementsrev1.shtml) structure. The characters in a play are also part of the plot.
* the **action** of the drama consists in the events that the characters take part in as they act the play.
* the **content** of the drama lies in the themes it deals with, eg bullying, the responsibilities of power, the bravery of ordinary people etc.

**Dramatic form**

The form of a drama is the way that the story is told, the way the characters play their parts, and/or the way the themes are explored.

There are various dramatic forms, for example:

* mime
* choral readings
* commedia dell'arte (improvised theatre)
* melodrama
* [*physical theatre*](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/drama/creating/elementsrev2.shtml)
* combinations of various forms and styles
* **Climax/anti-climax**
* The use of climax and anti-climax (the building and releasing of tension) in a drama is crucial, as it creates a sense of **expectation** in the audience. We can become incredibly tense as we wait to see what's going to happen in a play, and then we're **relieved** when things turn out well. It all adds to an interesting experience.
* **Contrast**
* The use of contrast in drama productions - eg **stillness contrasted with activity**, or silence contrasted with noise - is a useful way to focus the audience's attention. A drama being played with no change of pace or rhythm doesn't usually hold our interest, but most can be **brought to life** with the use of contrasting sights and sounds.
* An example of such contrast could be in a courtroom drama. At first there's the **hustle and bustle** of bringing in the prisoner, with everyone scurrying around trying to see and hear the judge's pronouncement. Then there's the sound of the gavel banging on his desk - and the resulting **quiet** before he pronounces the sentence. The audience can't fail to be interested!
* **Characterisation**
* The way an actor plays a role, using his/her acting skills to create a character in a drama, is known as characterisation.
* Think about how we describe someone. Of course everyone looks a bit different, but a person's character can be shown in many ways, and this is where the actor's skill comes in. You can show a character in the way they walk and move ([*body language*](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/drama/creating/elementsrev5.shtml)), in the way they speak (vocal qualities) and in their reaction to events in the drama.
* When creating a character we may use techniques such as [*hot-seating*](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/drama/creating/elementsrev5.shtml) to develop the role, but we also need to think about these other aspects of presenting the character so they can 'come alive' within the drama.

**Dramatic conventions**

There's a range of dramatic conventions (techniques) that have been used to create dramatic effects in plays and spectacles for centuries. Among these are:

* slow motion
* freeze-frame
* audience aside
* [*soliloquy*](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/drama/creating/elementsrev6.shtml)
* establishing one part of the space as one location, and a different part of the space as another location

**Symbols**

Dramas are produced to a great extent through the use of symbols - or representations - standing in for real things. Many of the following can be understood as symbols.

* props (eg a torn wedding photograph to represent a divorce)
* gestures (eg finger on lips as a symbol of silence)
* expressions (eg open mouth to represent surprise)
* costume (a white costume as a symbol of innocence)
* lighting (eg blue lighting to represent night-time)
* setting (dry ice vapour to represent a snowy wood)

**Explorative strategies**

**Still image/freeze frame**

Here are some ways to create a still image:

* one person acts as a [*sculptor*](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/drama/creating/explorative_strategiesrev1.shtml) and creates images by **positioning individuals** in the group in relation to one another to create a still image.
* a group can create an image **one by one**, to show a large group situation, eg after a road accident.
* a piece of action can be **stopped** at a particular moment, to allow an audience to appreciate what is happening.

**Why a still image? What does it add to a drama?**

Just like a photograph, a still image can be examined closely, and the audience can note [*body language*](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/drama/creating/explorative_strategiesrev1.shtml), **facial expressions** or [*proxemics*](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/drama/creating/explorative_strategiesrev1.shtml) to give clues as to the situation or the people within the situation at that moment.

**Thought-tracking**

Thought-tracking helps inform an audience about a character. You see it in action when:

* a character speaks out loud about his/her **inner thoughts** at a particular moment in the drama
* a character speaks out loud about his/her inner thoughts during a freeze frame/still-image

**Why give a thought-track? What does it add to a drama?**

Sometimes in daily life we would like to know what someone **thinks** at important moments. We really want to know how people have been affected by a situation. When we know more of what they are feeling, we **understand** them better. In drama, too, when we know more of what a character thinks or feels, the drama is deepened and the audience becomes more involved.

**Narrating**

Narrating is what you do when you're giving a **spoken commentary** on the action taking place during a drama. It's a useful technique when you want to **inform** the audience of what is happening.

**Why use narrating? What can it add to a drama?**

Narrating can make a drama more **understandable** or **stylised** in a number of ways:

* an actor can speak the commentary **over** the action happening in the drama.
* a character can **speak out** what s/he thinks the audience needs to know about the characters or the situation of which s/he is a part - this is called **self-narrating**.
* an actor can just tell the audience what they need to know **in between scenes**.
* a character can read or write a **diary** or **letter** that **informs** the audience what is important for them to know about what is happening or going to happen.
* **Role-play**
* Role-play is what you do when you're **pretending to be another person** and using your imagination to speak, think and even feel like that character.
* **Why use role-play? What does it add to a drama?**
* If you don't pretend to be someone else while acting in a drama, then the audience will see only 'you' and not the character you are meant to be portraying. They will only see 'you' in the situations that are described. If you make the role-play realistic and believable, then the audience will be more likely to '**suspend their disbelief**' (forget that they're watching a drama, and feel personally involved).
* **Cross-cutting**
* Cross-cutting is what you do after you've created a series of scenes or sequences, and you **re-order** them to create a drama that goes forwards and backwards in time.
* **Why use cross-cutting? What can it add to a drama?**
* Sometimes a drama that starts and carries on in a [*linear*](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/drama/creating/explorative_strategiesrev5.shtml) manner can be too predictable, which makes it boring to watch. With cross-cutting we can show the moment when something important happened in the past (using a **flash-back**), or we can move the drama forward in time (using a **flash-forward**). In this way the action can be broken up to enhance **tension**.
* **Hot-seating**
* Hot-seating is a way of **developing** (or deepening) character. If you are in the hot-seat you **answer questions** from others in the group while you are 'in role'.
* **Why use hot-seating? What can it add to a drama?**
* The characters will seem more **realistic** if you feel you really 'know' them. It is easier to be spontaneous and believable if you have carefully explored a character in your drama during the hot-seating process.
* **Forum theatre**
* Forum theatre is a technique you can use while acting out a scene. The group watching is encouraged to **stop the action** when they think it necessary, to **suggest a different action**. At other times, the actors themselves can stop the action, and ask for help. Sometimes someone else can step in and take over a role - or even introduce a new one.
* **Why use forum theatre? What can it add to a drama?**
* Sometimes it is hard, when devising drama, to imagine what a character might **do or say** at a particular moment. If you stop the drama when in role, and ask for help from your group, someone will probably give you a **good idea** of what to do or say next. They might also offer to take over the role to try out their idea - or even join the scene as another character altogether, to take things in a new direction.

**Marking the moment**

Marking the moment can happen when a scene has been created, and the group decides it's a **significant moment** in the drama, and they want to show this in some way.

**Why mark the moment? What can this add to a drama?**

At times things happen in a scene very quickly - and yet we know these moments can change the whole direction of a drama. This is when something is needed to **emphasize** the moment.

* we could use a **spotlight** to literally 'highlight' the moment.
* we could insert a [**thought-track.**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/drama/creating/explorative_strategiesrev2.shtml)
* we could slow down time, or use a [**still image/freeze-frame.**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/drama/creating/explorative_strategiesrev1.shtml)
* we could use [**narrating**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/drama/creating/explorative_strategiesrev3.shtml) by another actor, or **self-narrating**, to draw the audience's attention to this moment.